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Rethinking the Rational Animal

The Question of Anthropocentrism in Heidegger, Bergson, and Zen

Bret W. DAVIS

I fear that the animals consider humans to be beings of their same kind, who have lost, in a most dangerous manner, their sound animal common sense [*den gesunden Tierverstand*].

—Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*¹

With all eyes the creature beholds
the Open. Only our eyes,
as though reversed, encircle it on every side
as traps set round their unobstructed path to freedom.
What *is* outside, we know from the animal's
face alone...

—Rilke, *Duineser Elegien*²

For Rilke, human 'consciousness,' 'reason,' *logos*, is precisely the limitation that makes human being less capable than the animal. Are we then supposed to turn into 'animals'? ... Because he has the word, human being, and he alone, is the being who looks into [*hineinsieht*] the Open.... The animal, on the contrary, does not directly see the Open, never does, not with a single one of all its eyes.

—Heidegger, *Parmenides*³

In a tradition that runs from Aristotle through Heidegger, the human has been defined as the being capable of *logos*, a capacity which is thought to radically distinguish us from and elevate us above all (other) animals. The chirps, growls, and cries of the beasts, Descartes assures us, can in no way be compared to human being's power of rational linguistic thought and expression.⁴ Yet this dominant tradition of anthropocentrism has been repeatedly called into question in modern times. After Darwin (who wrote: "There is no fundamental difference between man and the higher animals in their mental faculties"⁵) and the more recent "cognitive ethologists,"⁶ and after Nietzsche⁷ and other late modern and postmodern thinkers, the issue of what distinguishes "man from beast" has once again been adorned with a question mark.

Various Western philosophers and phenomenologists have attempted to grapple anew with the question of animality/humanity. In this essay I shall consider two: Heidegger and Bergson. Heidegger is interesting in this regard for

his radical attempt to reinstate an abysmal distinction between the human and the animal, even though—or precisely because—he himself thoroughly criticizes the rationalistic tradition of humanism. Bergson's "creative evolution," on the other hand, while reiterating in its own manner a kind of anthropocentrism, concedes a certain superiority to animals. An instinctual nearness to the flow of life is said to give them an important advantage over against human intellectual abstraction from the concrete and heterogeneous movement of qualitative time.

While Heidegger's closeness to East Asian thought is often recognized, in this case it is Bergson who invites comparison with Zen's critique of abstract intellection and call for a return to a more spontaneous non-dualistic way of being-in-the-world. In the final part of this essay, I shall show how a critical rethinking of the Western determination of human being as the "rational animal" can be aided by a dialogue with this non-Western tradition,⁸ a tradition which locates human authenticity quite differently in a breakthrough of abstract *logos* and dualistic rationality.

Heidegger's Logocentric Humans and World-Poor Animals

Aristotle's definition of human being as "the animal who has *logos*" (*zôon logon echon*), which later gets translated into the more familiar Latin phrase *animal rationale*, both connects us with and separates us from (other) animals. Aristotle argued that plants, animals and humans all have an animating principle of life which he calls the "soul" (*psychê*). He divides this soul into various parts, a division which, he says, "enables us to classify animals." This classification takes place by observing that "some animals possess all these parts of soul, some certain of them only, others one only."⁹ Thus plants would have only the "vegetative" or "nutritive" soul, animals in addition the "appetitive" soul, and only human beings the "rational" soul, that is, "the power of thinking" (*dianoetikon*) and "intelligence" (*nous*).¹⁰ Human beings alone are said to "possess reasoning [*logismon*] and thought [*dianoian*],"¹¹ and they alone share with the gods the activity of "contemplation" (*theôria*).

This distinction of "having *logos*" underlies the mainstream anthropo-logocentrism of the Western philosophical tradition, and this tradition—despite the imaginative objections of Romanticism, Nietzsche's retrieval of the pre-Socratic Dionysian side of the Greek experience of life, and Derrida's deconstructions of "carno-phallogocentrism"¹²—continues to heavily influence the way we view the world, including our presumptions of an abysmal separation between spiritual humanity and embodied animality.

Heidegger is an interesting philosopher in the regard; for precisely when he

deconstructs the representational metaphysics of the West, he reinscribes and insists on an "abyss which separates humans from animals." In fact, Heidegger will radicalize this abyss, targeting the latinized Aristotelian notion of *animal rationale* as the metaphysical conception of human being that must be overcome. In an attempt to retrieve a more originary sense of "logos" as a "gathering" (*legein*) that, rather than manipulating things according to universal laws of nature, would let beings show themselves from themselves, he reiterates the assertion that *logos* is the exclusive and defining characteristic of human being. While severely criticizing the Enlightenment tradition of "humanism," Heidegger himself proffers a kind of "higher humanism" which grants to human being (as *Da-sein*) a central role in the "worlding of the world" (namely as the "guardian of the clearing of Being"). Heidegger's critique of humanism does not steer us in the direction of reaffirming our natural link with animals, but rather in the opposite direction. Thus, in his "Letter on 'Humanism,'" we find Heidegger repeating, rather than leaving behind, a metaphysical aspiration to the divine and away from bodily entanglement with animals.

Of all the beings that are, presumably the most difficult to think about are living beings [*das Lebe-Wesen*], because on the one hand they are in a certain way most closely akin to us, and on the other they are at the same time separated from our ek-sistent essence by an abyss. However, it might also seem as though the essence of divinity is closer to us than what is so alien in other living beings, closer, namely, in an essential distance that, however distant, is nonetheless more familiar to our ek-sistent essence than is our scarcely conceivable, abysmal bodily kinship with the animal.¹³

While occasionally repeating such remarks in connection with his emphatic critique of the notion of *animal rationale*, Heidegger himself takes up in detail the difficult task of thinking the essence of animality only once, in a long section of a 1929-30 lecture course entitled *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*. In this first and only extensive consideration of animal life, Heidegger concludes that only humans are "world-forming" (*weltbildend*), for we alone are linguistically open to the Being of beings. Ambiguously—and for Heidegger disturbingly—situated between world-forming humans and worldless stones, animals are said to be, at best, "poor in world" (*weltarm*).¹⁴

A few years later, in less developed but even harsher comments, Heidegger claims that the "animal has no world," because world is always "*spiritual* world," nor has it in the true sense even any "environment" (*Umwelt*).¹⁵ The term "world" comes to mean for Heidegger the Open as the clearing of Being wherein beings come to show themselves. "Human being, and he alone," Heidegger claims,

"sees into the Open.... The animal, on the contrary, does not glimpse or see into ... the Open in the sense of the unconcealedness of the unconcealed."¹⁶ The animal is open to the world only in the restricted sense of behavior (*Benahmen*) as "captivation" (*Benommenheit*); the animal, being "absorbed in itself," is excluded from the manifestness of beings.¹⁷ Because human being "has the word," among all beings he alone is capable of seeing into the Being of beings. This linguistically aided capacity to "see into" (*hineinsehen*) the Open is said to be what "forms the insurmountable essential boundary between animal and human."¹⁸

One might have expected Heidegger—as a critic of "humanism" and of the metaphysically reductive scientific world-view, as a thinker who early on sought to ground abstract theory in concrete being-in-the-world, and as one who later wrote of the poetic work arising out of and returning to a more primordial silence—to be more sympathetic to the idea of an original nearness of human existence to animal "life." In fact, in one single passage in the course of 200 pages of trenchant clarification of the elusive abyss which separates us from animals, Heidegger concedes that "the animal's poverty in world ... is nonetheless a kind of wealth," that animal "life is a domain which possesses a wealth of openness with which the human world may have nothing to compare."¹⁹

Nevertheless, even though "humans can sink lower than any animal,"²⁰ they are also uniquely capable of seeing into the Open and of bringing the Being of beings to expression. One wonders whether it may be precisely because Heidegger wishes to speak at the end of these 200 pages of "a return to the pre-logical manifestness of beings,"²¹ that he felt compelled first to lay out in detail what this did not mean, namely, a return to animality. His break with the tradition inaugurated in part by Aristotle did *not* mean calling into question the abyss between the human and the animal; it meant rather rethinking and indeed reinforcing it. In any case, having made his point in this text, Heidegger never again takes up in any detail the question of animality, other than to periodically reiterate his assertion of an abysmal distinction between it and the humanity of *Dasein*.²²

While early on clearly influenced by Bergson's thought, Heidegger later rejects all such *Lebensphilosophie* as still bound to the metaphysical misunderstanding of human being as the rational animal. (He sees Nietzsche as having merely overturned the traditional emphasis on human *rationality* to accord priority to the *animality* of the rational animal.²³) The question of "life" is, for Heidegger, inextricably intertwined with the question of the animal, and neither for him is central to the exclusively human task of thinking. Bergson, on the other hand, takes up the relation of humans to animals as a philosophical question *par excellence*, and it is for him only by way of understanding animality that we can understand humanity. We shall find that Bergson's theory of "creative evolution"

is most interesting in the context of rethinking the rational animal, both for its critique of and for its continuity with the tradition of anthropologocentrism. Moreover, his notion of "intuition," which attempts to go beyond intellection and recover, in a properly human manner, the immediacy of instinct, opens the way to a dialogue with Zen.

Bergson's Creative Evolution: Instinct, Intellection, and Intuition

In his first major work, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, Bergson's speaks out against the spacialization of fluid time, the quantification of qualitative difference, and the way that "language requires us to establish between our ideas the same sharp and precise distinctions, the same discontinuity, as between material objects."²⁴ Through this critique Bergson sought to reawaken a sense for the inner freedom of the *élan vital*, to return us to an intuition of the *durée pure* of creative time. The "superficial self" of intellection and linguistic sociality, akin to what Heidegger calls *das Man*, comes to cover up that fundamental self in touch with his or her inner freedom, a freedom which springs from an intimate connection to the vital impulse of life itself. Thus one finds around the fundamental self a "parasitic self" whose linguistic deposits and social habits leave a crust that keeps one from experiencing one's inner freedom.²⁵ The generalities of language and communal life arise out of and exacerbate our obsession with making everything the same, an obsession which Bergson depicts as a kind of self-defense mechanism, "a reaction against that heterogeneity which is the very ground of our experience."²⁶

Other animals are said to not be victims/perpetrators of this homogenizing space; they do not reduce the many shades of singular quality to a "pure geometrical form." Nor do animals mistake temporal duration for "materialized time that has become quantity by being set out in space."²⁷ Animals do not, Bergson writes, "picture to themselves... as we do, an external world quite distinct from themselves,"²⁸ but rather act spontaneously in a more originary spacial and temporal heterogeneity.

And yet, despite the advantage that animal instinct is accorded over human intellection in these occasional remarks in *Time and Free Will*, there is another side to Bergson's thought, as is revealed in the following passage from his last major work, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*: "We regard intelligence as [man's] main characteristic, and we know that there is no superiority which intelligence cannot confer on us, no inferiority for which it cannot compensate."²⁹ Is this not traditional anthropocentric intellectualism all over again? Not quite. For even if Bergson does, in the end, reiterate a quasi-teleological anthropocentric

hierarchy of life, it is ultimately neither the sociability of the "political animal" nor the *logos* of intelligence that makes it possible for humans alone to break out of their "closed" circle of existence. For Bergson, an intuitive reconnection with the greater flow of the *élan vital*, with "naturing Nature," can only take place by way of what Deleuze calls "creative emotion."³⁰

It may not, in the final analysis, be possible to completely iron out all the wrinkles in Bergson's highly ambivalent attitude toward "intelligence," that is, toward conscious intellectual thought. A dynamic tension between dualities is indeed a pattern that runs throughout Bergson's writings; such dualities include quality/quantity, time/space, mind/matter, and finally open/closed (moralities and religions). One major duality that runs through his works—the one most pertinent with respect to the question of animality—is that of instinct/intelligence. In contrast to the above listed pairs, however, there is not always a clear order of priority expressed here. What we must try to understand is, in John Mullarkey words: "Bergson's ambivalence towards the value of instinct and animality—at times closest to life, at other times closer to the lifeless."³¹ If there is in the end a resolution to this tension in Bergson's thought, it is to be found, as we shall see, in a third term that he adds to this pair: "intuition."

In order to appreciate both Bergson's praise and his criticism of intelligence (conscious reflection), we must understand these in the context of the key structuring idea of his thought: "creative evolution." This notion does not imply, Bergson tells us, a unidirectional teleology, but points rather to a movement propelled by the tension between two opposed yet intertwined forces. Thus, even though Bergson will speak of "a sudden leap from the animal to man," such that the latter "might be considered the reason for the existence of the entire organization of life on our planet," there is in reality, he cautions, "only a current of existence and the opposite current,"³² only a push toward conscious life and a pull back toward inert matter. The dialectical dynamic between life and its lifeless deposits explodes out simultaneously in countless directions; and it is only by chance that it has "gone the farthest" in the form of human being.

But what does Bergson mean by "farthest" here? What sacrifices have we made, and what is the direction of our possible further advancement? He writes:

*It is as if a vague and formless being, whom we may call, as we will, man or superman, had sought to realize himself, and had succeeded only by abandoning a part of himself on the way. The losses are represented by the rest of the animal world, and even by the vegetable world....*³³

What are the losses represented by the animals? In a word: the immediacy of instinct. What animals reveal to us is that even "reflection itself, the secret of

man's strength, might look like weakness, for it is the source of indecision, whereas the reaction of an animal, when it is truly instinctive, is instantaneous and unflinching."³⁴

Thus, according to Bergson, "instinct and intelligence imply two radically different kinds of knowledge."³⁵ What, first of all, does he understand by instinct or instinctual action? Just as he links intellection with conscious thought, Bergson understands instinct to be a matter of "unconsciousness." But here he marks a crucial difference between two types of unconsciousness, namely:

that in which consciousness is *absent*, and that in which consciousness is *nullified*.... The unconsciousness of a falling stone is of the former kind. [The second occurs when we so directly *act* that] the representation of the act is held in check by the performance of the act itself, which resembles the idea so perfectly, and fits it so exactly, that consciousness is unable to find room between them. *Representation is stopped up by action*.... The inadequacy of act to representation is precisely what we here call consciousness. [In other words,] consciousness is the light that plays around the zone of possible actions.... It signifies hesitation or choice.³⁶

The latter sense of unconsciousness, where the animal (human or otherwise) acts in such unison with its surroundings that there is no gap for the hesitancy of the conscious and ultimately self-conscious self to creep in and take over, reminds one of what Zen calls "no-mind" (*mushin*), an idea that we shall examine below.

According to Bergson, a conscious distance from reality is both the blessing and the curse of thinking beings. Conscious representational thought, "in shaping itself into intelligence," has enabled we humans to "objectively" move among external objects, "evading the barriers they oppose to [us], thus opening to [ourselves] an unlimited field."³⁷ But this abstract objectification ambivalently both makes possible a transcendence of subjective enclosure and provides the ego with a powerful tool for self-centered manipulation of the world. While abstraction from the here and now allows us a "momentary slackening of the attachment to life," it ultimately "cannot be relied on to keep up this selflessness," for in the end intelligence "would more likely council egoism."³⁸

The contemporary Zen philosopher Ueda Shizuteru writes of a similar ambivalence with regard to human being: The unique trait of *homo erectus*, namely to stand upright on two legs, both freed the hands for the manipulation of tools and raised the head horizontally parallel to the ground so that one has the world "objectively" in view. This bipedal stance enables *both* the openness *and* the egocentrism of human beings; at one and the same time a horizontal "world-view" opens us up to the horizon of the encircling world and yet centers that world,

either as "present-" or "ready-to-hand," on our very ego. Zen meditation abandons momentarily the "elevated superiority" of our bipedal stance and returns one to a sitting posture, with legs entwined and empty hands folded, granting one the opportunity to stand up once again in a more originary (re)opening to the world and to others on a centerless field of "interdependent origination."³⁹

Staying with Bergson for the moment: On the one hand, conscious intellection has enabled us to free ourselves from the environment; on the other hand, it has estranged us from the world. On the one hand, abstract and spacial thought has made possible a technological control over much of our lives; on the other hand, this objectification saps the life, the *élan vital*, out of everything it touches. Instinct, on the contrary, stays in touch with, if also bound to, this greater flow of life. Indeed, Bergson writes that "intelligence and instinct are turned in opposite directions, the former towards inert matter, and the latter towards life."⁴⁰

Thus Bergson, who despite all the optimism of his creative evolution does not begin with a Leibnizian confidence that this is the best of all possible worlds, at one point sighs: "If the force immanent in life were an unlimited force, it might perhaps have developed instinct and intelligence together, and to any extent, in the same organisms."⁴¹ The tone of Bergson's thought is, nevertheless, on the whole exceedingly positive, and although there can be no simple return to animal instinct (nor should there be), he posits a third term which would reunite the opposition of consciousness and life, a higher kind of instinctual knowing, namely, intuition. Just as "there subsisted around animal instinct a fringe of intelligence," he says, "so human intelligence preserved a halo of intuition."⁴² Although we gain a hint of the immediacy of this intuition from the animals, in fact "intuition had to debase itself to become instinct," and what we are after is thus something greater, not a mere return to animality.

Although human consciousness, according to Bergson, is preeminently intellect, he suggests that it "might have been, it ought, so it seems, to have been also intuition." "A complete and perfect humanity," he writes, "would be that in which these two forms of conscious activity should attain their full development."⁴³ Having followed the path of reflection far enough (perhaps too far), the task now is to "awaken the potentialities of intuition which still slumber within [intelligence]."⁴⁴ Bergson defines this higher intuition as "instinct that has become disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting upon its object and of enlarging it indefinitely."⁴⁵

For all his criticism of abstract and spacializing consciousness, then, in the end Bergson sees it as performing a vital role in the process of creative evolution; once it is reunited with instinct, both the limits of intellectualism and those of animality can be overcome. Because of his potential for this intuitive reunification, according to Bergson, "man comes to occupy a privileged place. Between him and

the animals the difference is no longer one of degree, but one of kind."⁴⁶ Nevertheless, we present human beings have hardly achieved this intuitive return. "In the humanity of which we are a part, intuition is, in fact, almost completely sacrificed to intellect." For us, intuition is "a lamp almost extinguished, which only glimmers now and then, for a few moments at most."⁴⁷

Ultimately Bergson will turn to mysticism, not of the contemplative sort, but that of "action, creation, love." Our task is to reconnect with the *élan vital* of life, a connection that has been severed in abstract reflection, by way of "turning back for fresh impetus," not through intelligence, but in the opposite direction: through intuition. All around intelligence, Bergson tells us, "there lingers still a fringe of intuition, vague and evanescent." And thus he urges: "Can we not fasten upon it, intensify it, and above all, consummate it in action...?"⁴⁸

Curiously, Bergson argues that Buddhism attained only the penultimate stage in the mystical "effort at oneness with the creative impetus," claiming that it stops "half-way, dangling all dizzy in the void between two activities, between the human life it has left behind and the divine life it has not yet reached."⁴⁹ Like so many Western thinkers of this time period, following in the footsteps of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche before them, Bergson's familiarity with Buddhism seems to have been largely restricted to a partial image of the "Arhants" of the Indian Theravada tradition, and he judged what he knew to "lack warmth and glow," to be ignorant of "the complete and mysterious gift of the self," and to not "believe in the efficacy of action."⁵⁰ What would he have had to say with regard to the Compassionate Light of Amitabha, or the Buddha-nature that dwells both equally and uniquely within each singular one of us, or with regard to the Zen identification of *satori* with a wholehearted engagement in everyday activity?

Zen and the Intuitive Activity of No-Mind

Bergson's criticism of the Western tradition of intellectualism, and his attempt to return to a more direct experience of life, resonate in a number of ways with Zen. The "anti-intellectual" stance of Zen is well known in the West, no doubt because its Eastern representatives have often emphasized this aspect in contrast to a Western bias toward abstract intellection. It is D. T. Suzuki, particularly in his early writings, that is chiefly responsible for impressing upon Western minds the limits of intellection according to Zen. He writes: "The worst enemy of Zen experience, at least in the beginning, is the intellect, which consists and insists in discriminating subject from object," and the first purpose of the *kōan* exercise is thus "to make the calculating mind die."⁵¹ What is left once one has succeeded in thoroughly suspending the calculating mind, he says, is what the Zen

masters have called "no-mind" (*mushin*) or "no-thought" (*munen*).

In order to ward off a knee jerk reaction to this anti-intellectualism, we should add to these terms what Dôgen, following Yüeh-shan Wei-yen (Yakusan Igen), calls "non-thinking" (*hi-shiryô*). This non-thinking is said to be neither "(calculating) thought" (*shiryô*) nor simply a negation of thinking (*fu-shiryô*), but to involve rather a wisdom that "transcends thought and yet appears in thought."⁵² The banishment of all intellection, then, would not be the "goal" of Zen meditation, but only a temporary interruption, a step on the way towards overcoming the kind of conceptual thinking based on dualistic discrimination. Ultimately, however, as demonstrated particularly in higher levels of *kôan* training, *zazen* would open the door to a different "non-dual" way of thinking.⁵³

What then does it mean to dwell in a state of no-mind or, as Suzuki sometimes translates it, "Unconsciousness"? Suzuki cites famous Zen masters who describe their state of awakening as a matter of: "When I feel sleepy, I sleep; when I want to sit, I sit"; or again: "In summer we seek a cool place; when it is cold we sit by a fire." A novice monk at this point asks: "That is what other people do; is their way the same as yours?" The master replies that it is not the same, for "when they eat, they do not just eat, they conjure up all kinds of imagination; when they sleep, they do not just sleep, they are given up to varieties of idle thoughts."⁵⁴

But here is our question: Does this intuitively natural living suggest a kind of return to animality? What is the difference between these "everyday acts ... done naturally, instinctively, effortlessly, and unconsciously"⁵⁵ and the instinctual behavior of animals?

There are, to be sure, analogical references to animals in this regard to be found in Zen texts. Suzuki himself quotes elsewhere Ta-hui who describes the moment of *satori* as one where you feel "like a lion roaming about freely with nobody disturbing him, or like an elephant that crosses a stream not minding its swift current."⁵⁶ And we could refer to other passages from important Zen texts such as the *Zazengi*, which uses animal analogies to speak of the homecoming experience of seeing into one's original nature: "it is like a dragon obtaining water; like a lion abiding in the mountains."⁵⁷

Suzuki quotes a passage from Bodhidharma that would, in fact, seem to suggest a certain equivalence here:

It is like the bee sucking the flower, like the sparrow pecking at grains, like cattle feeding on beans, like the horse grazing in the field; when your mind is free from the idea of private possession, all goes well with you.⁵⁸

The context of this passage is the question of ethical responsibility and the idea of

overcoming even the moral dualism of "good and bad, just and unjust." Rather shockingly, Suzuki claims that in the state of no-mind "you behave like the wind, and who blames the wind when it leaves havoc in its wake?"⁵⁹ "But," he goes on to add, "[ethical] laws are like the wind too." The state of no-mind would thus presumably entail carrying out moral imperatives as spontaneously and as naturally as eating when one is hungry.

What precisely, however, is the relation of human no-mind to animal instinct and to inorganic phenomena like fire and wind? In a Japanese text on the topic of no-mind, Suzuki treats this issue directly and in some detail.⁶⁰ He begins by contrasting the freedom of fire and wind with the dualistic discrimination which plagues human consciousness, and proceeds to raise the question of whether this means that the ideal of no-mind entails abandoning the human mind, becoming insentient (*mujō*) and acting like the physical forces of nature. This, he concludes however, is in the end neither possible nor desirable for humans. Next, he considers "animal no-mind" as exemplified by instinctual behavior. Much as a fire indiscriminately both brings warmth to and burns down a home, so does a lion unhesitatingly both protect its young and devour an unlucky passerby. Both the no-mind of natural forces and that of instinct driven animals, different as they are in other respects, share this unhesitating spontaneity in contrast with our own dualistic deliberations.

While we have much to learn from the no-mind of animal instinct, this is not, Suzuki clearly states, to be equated with "human no-mind." Discriminatory consciousness is both the blessing and the curse of humanity; on the one hand, it is the source of our culture, our ethics, our science and philosophy—in short, our "values"; on the other hand, it is the root of our alienation from one another and from nature, as well as of our egoistic treatment of that which we project as other. The task, then, is not simply to return to instinctual no-mind; or rather, this return is not to be thought of as a simple one. Suzuki writes that "the question is to what degree we can bring the no-mind that exists within instinct into the human world, and to what degree we must let this instinctual no-mind act within this world—for in the midst of this very contradiction [between the no-mind of instinct and the human world] lies the road forward for our spiritual life."⁶¹

Human mind (*ningenteki ushin*) steps out of and overcomes the no-mind of instinct; and yet, "it is necessary now to return this mind once more to the world of no-mind. To 'return' here means to overcome the contradiction of the fact that [in order to attain true no-mind] it was necessary for human mind to step out of instinctual unconsciousness and non-teleological no-mind."⁶² To overcome this contradiction, however, is not a single act, but rather a matter of learning to live dynamically within this tension, to dwell in the "no-mind of the contradiction just as it is" (*mujun no mama no mushin*).

On first consideration it appears that no-mind is equivalent to affirming instinct. While in one aspect this is indeed the case, nevertheless that which has an infinite meaning—something that is not to be sensed within the animal no-mind up to this point—only arises by way of adding to instinct the discipline of the human conscious mind. To live this ‘meaning of no-meaning’ is what is called the life of no-mind.⁶³

What would it mean to live within this contradiction of thought (meaning) and instinct?

Moving according to animal instinct, and yet adding on top of this human mind (*ningenteki ushin*); then by neither relying on instinct nor stopping at [human] mind, by walking forth between being (*u*) and nothingness (*mu*), or rather by walking in that place where both of these are no longer to be found; this is where I wish to recognize what is called human no-mind (*ningenteki mushin*).⁶⁴

Suzuki’s “return to no-mind” is not a retreat from the human world of thought and values; but neither does it simply reaffirm this world. Transcending the world while living in its very midst is, of course, nothing other than the life of a Bodhisattva, and this life is depicted here as one of released engagement in our human world of values and discriminatory thought, without, however, abandoning the quasi-instinctual (i.e., intuitive) spontaneity of no-mind.

Despite Suzuki’s claim that we have much to learn from animals (as well as from wind and fire) in our journey towards recovering a properly human no-mind, he does not counsel a simple return to animality. In fact, he reproduces a quasi-hierarchical model of progression from the mechanical world through the world of instinct to the ethical world of duty and valuation, and finally to the religious world where no-mind would be recovered without abandoning the world of mind.⁶⁵ The “return to no-mind” would in the end lead forward into a critically attuned yet spontaneously intuitive engagement in our human (if often “all too human”) world of values and discriminatory thought.

Many a philosopher will no doubt persist in finding fault with Zen for not having given the positive potentials of human reasoning their full due. Or, conversely, one might point out how Zen’s own prolific writings (*goroku*) draw as much on the textual and “intellectual” traditions of Buddhism as do these, in turn, receive inspiration from the meditational practice of “stepping back from words and letters.” Moreover, consideration must be given to the fact that part of the Buddhist heritage that Zen takes over—albeit in its own demythologizing and deconstructive style—is the *mythos* of transmigration through the “six realms of

existence," a cosmology with its own distinct versions of an anthropocentric hierarchy and a derogatory view of animals. Zen too, therefore, would need to respond more fully to the contemporary critique of anthropologocentrism, a critique that positively revives the very question of the intertwined yet distinct essences of animality and humanity.⁶⁶ In any case, as we have seen, Zen promises to be an engaging dialogue partner in our ongoing attempts to rethink the rational animal of the West.

Notes

¹ Nietzsche *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1967), Part 5 Vol. 2, p. 188 (*Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, aph. 224); *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1974), p. 211, translation modified.

² Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duineser Elegien, Die Sonette an Orpheus* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1997), p. 35, my translation. The animal, Rilke goes on to write, moves far more freely in that "unsupervised" and "pure space" which we experience only fleetingly as children, or when, "nearing death, one perceives death no more/and stares ahead, perhaps with great animal gaze." Whereas we "perceive only a mirroring of the free and open [*des Frei'n*]," the animal, though not itself without the "weight and care of a great sadness," nevertheless "sees everything, and itself in everything, for ever healed." (Ibid., pp. 35-36.)

³ Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides, Gesamtausgabe* Vol. 54, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1992), pp. 229, 231; *Parmenides*, trans. André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), pp. 154-155, translation modified. We can surmise that it is precisely because Heidegger shares with Rilke the critique of modern "subjective consciousness" (which sets the "subject" dualistically over against the world as "object"), while at the same time attempting to retrieve a more primordial sense of *logos* and of human being, that he so vehemently rejects what he calls Rilke's metaphysical "animalization of humanity" and "humanization of the animal." It should be noted, however, that Rilke does not in the end council a simple return to animality, as Heidegger fears. The human condition, according to Rilke's poetry, is to be caught between the animal and what he calls the terrible image of the "Angel" (not to be understood, he tells us, in the Christian sense, but as that being which has already overcome the all too human contradictions between thought and action, the actual and the ideal, etc., and who thus both inspires and rebukes us), and our task is to carry out the "transition of the visible into the invisible," that is, into a higher consciousness, one which no longer objectifies and alienates.

⁴ According to Descartes, "reason or sense," which he claims can be witnessed only in human language, is that which "makes us men and distinguishes us from the beasts." *Descartes: Selected Philosophical Writings*, trans. John Cottingham et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 21. It is interesting to note that Hume rejects the clarity of Descartes' distinction, and in a rare moment certainty claims that "no truth appears to me more evident, than that beasts are endow'd with thought and reason as well as men." (Quoted in Donald R. Griffin, *Animal Thinking* [Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984], p. 2.)

⁵ Quoted in Collin Allen and Marc Bekoff, *Species of Mind: The Philosophy and Biology of Cognitive Ethology* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1997), p. 24.

⁶ Allen and Bekoff define "cognitive ethology" as "the comparative, evolutionary, and ecological study of animal thought processes, beliefs, rationality, information processing, and consciousness." (*Species of Mind*, p. ix.)

⁷ Nietzsche's Zarathustra—unable to find human ears ready to hear his message—preached to the animals his doctrine of "remaining true to the earth." Graham Parkes gives an interesting account of how Nietzsche, who characterized the human as "the sickest animal" for being farthest removed from its instincts, shares many similarities with Taoism, beginning with the fact that both see anthropocentrism as a major problem. (Graham Parkes, "Human/Nature in Nietzsche and Taoism," in *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, eds. J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames [Albany: SUNY Press, 1989], pp. 79-97.)

⁸ Paul Münch, according to whom a "reconstruction of the relation of animal to human," far from being

"an exotic fringe problem," should be considered to be a matter of "interdisciplinary, historical foundation-laying research," recommends such hermeneutical bi-directionality as follows: "It is important on the one hand to make use of the experiences of history, and on the other hand to direct one's vision across the boundaries of one's own culture. Both ways of knowledge, each of which hopes to clarify one's own situation through a comparison with other circumstances, are effective in relativizing hardened standpoints, shaking up gridlocked positions, and making possible new answers to old questions." (Paul Münch, "Tiere und Menschen: Ein Thema der historischen Grundlagenforschung," in *Tiere und Menschen: Geschichte und Aktualität eines Prekären Verhältnisses*, eds. Paul Münch and Rainer Waltz [Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1998], pp. 14 and 18.)

⁹ Aristotle, *On the Soul* II.413b32-4.

¹⁰ Ibid., II.414b17-18.

¹¹ Ibid., II.415a8.

¹² Jacques Derrida, "'Eating Well,' or the Calculation of the Subject: an Interview with Jacques Derrida," in *Who Comes after the Subject*, eds. Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor and Jean-Luc Nancy (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 113.

¹³ Martin Heidegger, *Wegmarken, Gesamtausgabe* Vol. 9, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996), p. 326; *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 248, translation modified.

¹⁴ See Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik, Gesamtausgabe* Vol. 29/30, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1992), pp. 261ff.; *The Fundamental Problems of Metaphysics*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 176ff.

¹⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, 5th ed. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1987), p. 34; *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 47.

¹⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*, p. 237 (trans., p. 159, translation modified). Cf. also *ibid.*, pp. 158-9 (trans., p. 107).

¹⁷ See Heidegger, *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik*, pp. 358ff. (trans., pp. 246ff.).

¹⁸ Heidegger, *Parmenides*, p. 226 (trans., p. 152).

¹⁹ Heidegger, *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik*, pp. 371-372 (trans., p. 255). Decades later, in a letter to the psychiatrist Menard Boss, Heidegger suggests that "the strangeness [*Befremdliche*] of the essence of the animal" for us lies in the fact that "the immediate apprehension of the environment proper to the animal and, thus, also the genuine apprehension of the animal's relation to the environment remains inaccessible to our knowledge." Despite the ignorance due to this strange inaccessibility, however, Heidegger here again confidently asserts an "abysmal difference in essence between the [human] relation to a 'world' [*Weltbezug*] and the [animal] relation to a 'surroundings' [*Umgebungsbezug*]." (Martin Heidegger, *Zollikoner Seminare*, ed. Menard Boss, 2nd ed. [Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994], pp. 306-307; *Zollikon Seminars*, trans. Franz Mayr and Richard Askay [Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2001], p. 244, translation modified.)

²⁰ Heidegger, *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik*, p. 286 (trans., p. 194).

²¹ Ibid., p. 510 (trans., p. 351).

²² Jacques Derrida has sparked great critical interest in Heidegger's account of animality by including it as one of the four "threads of hesitation" in his *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). D. F. Krell has pursued this question with both rigor and jest, venturing to ask: "What if the clearing and granting of being had to do with neither 'man' nor 'Dasein' but with all the life that lives and dies on Earth.... What if the lookers and lovers, the gods and dogs, having no particular need of speech, were the proper guardians of the clearing?" (David Farrell Krell, *Daimon Life: Heidegger and Life-Philosophy* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992], p. 17.)

²³ Nietzsche's *Übermensch* is said to be a mere reversal of the traditional notion of rational animal; "he is the *animal rationale* that is fulfilled in *brutalitas*." (Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Vol. 2, 5th ed. [Pfullingen: Neske, 1989], p. 23.)

²⁴ Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F. L. Bogson (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1910), p. xix.

²⁵ See *ibid.*, pp. 166-167.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 97.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 127.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 138.

²⁹ Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R. Ashley Audra and Cloudesley Brereton, with the assistance of W. Horsfall Carter (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame

Press, 1977), pp. 181-182.

³⁰ See Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1991), pp. 107ff.

³¹ John Mullarkey, *Bergson and Philosophy* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), p. 5.

³² Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (Mineola, New York: Dover, 1998), p. 185.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

³⁴ Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, p. 182.

³⁵ Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 143.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

³⁸ Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, p. 210.

³⁹ See Ueda Shizuteru, *Ikiru to iu Koto: Keiken to Jikaku* [What it means to live: experience and self-awareness] (Kyoto: Jinbunshoin, 1991), pp. 31-42. I have here somewhat freely developed thoughts gathered from these pages.

⁴⁰ Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 176. Later Bergson will make the same contrast between "intellect" and "intuition." See *ibid.*, p. 267.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

⁴² Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, p. 249.

⁴³ Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 267.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

⁴⁸ Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, p. 212.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 34 and 225.

⁵¹ D. T. Suzuki, *Zen Buddhism: Selected Writings of D. T. Suzuki*, ed. William Barrett (New York: Doubleday, 1996), pp. 136-138.

⁵² From Dôgen's "Zazenshin" [The point of zazen], following Kagamishima Genryû's interpretive modern Japanese translation. See *Dôgen Zenji Goroku* [The recorded sayings of Zen Master Dôgen], ed. Kagamishima Genryû (Tokyo: Kôdansha, 1990), pp. 183-4. On Dôgen's instruction to "think the basis of not-thinking by way of zazen as non-thinking," see the "Fukanzazengi" in *ibid.*, p. 175.

⁵³ David Loy attempts to develop a theory of "nondual thinking" by drawing on Zen and other Asian philosophies in his *Nonduality: A Study in Comparative Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 133-177.

⁵⁴ Suzuki, *Zen Buddhism*, 207.

⁵⁵ Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *The Zen Doctrine of No-Mind* (London: Rider and Company, 1958), pp. 106-107.

⁵⁶ Suzuki, *Zen Buddhism*, p. 141.

⁵⁷ *Zen no Goroku* [The recorded sayings of the Zen masters], Vol. 16, eds. Kajitani Sônin, Yanagida Seizan and Tsujimura Kôichi (Tokyo: Chikuma, 1974), p. 155.

⁵⁸ Suzuki, *Zen Buddhism*, pp. 117-118.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

⁶⁰ *Mushin to iu Koto* [What is called no-mind], in *Suzuki Daisetsu Zenshû* [Complete works of Suzuki Daisetsu], Vol. 7 (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1999), esp. pp. 260-277.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 276-277.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

⁶⁵ See *ibid.*, p. 274.

⁶⁶ I have dealt elsewhere in much greater detail with the question of animality in Zen. See my "Does a Dog See into its Buddha-nature? Re-posing the Question of Animality in Zen Buddhism," in *Buddha Animals/Animal Buddhas: Buddha Nature and Animality*, ed. David Jones (Oneonta Press, forthcoming).

